

COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.
Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

VOL. II. NO. 25

SAN DIEGO, ALTA CALIFORNIA, FEBRUARY 27, 2009

PRICE: FREE

Of Bricks and Mortar

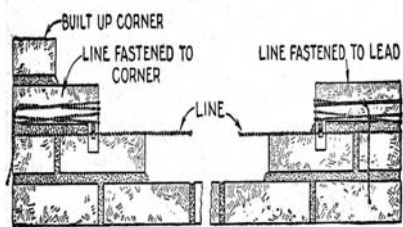
Part II

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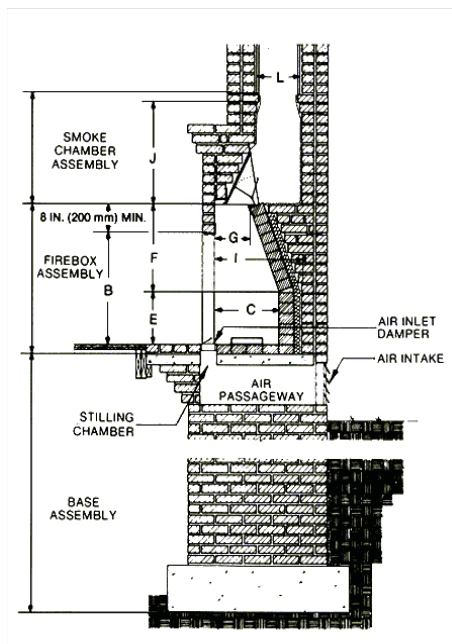
End corners of the wall were usually built up several courses to align the placement of additional bricks. A strand of cord was fastened around the corner bricks. Made from horsehair, reeds, or ship rigging, it provided a straight line across the section to be bricked. The line was always set a slight distance from the brickwork so that it would not be knocked out of place.



—Safe method of fastening line around corner and lead. To fasten the line around the corner and lead, take several clove hitches around each.

The fireplace has a curved arch trim. It once had a decorative wooden mantelpiece pegged into the brick face, similar to the one recently removed from the fireplace downstairs. Interestingly, the two fireplaces are slightly off center from one another so that separate flue lines could run inside the chimney. The downstairs flue spans the width of the fireplace and

then tapers off running up the left side of the chimney, while the upstairs flue runs up the right side. There probably is a brick partition in the center separating the two lines.



The District plans to make the three fireplaces functional with gas insert, or possibly an electric insert. Most of the historic brick on the faces of the two upstairs fireplaces appears to be salvageable. They will have to be tested for strength, cleaned, and the joints re-pointed with lime mortar. Non-hydraulic lime mortar should be used because it hardens slowly. It should be mixed at a ratio of about 1 part lime to 3 parts sand.

Masonry is an age-old craft that has changed relatively little over time. Masons still use traditional tools, like the trowel, jointer, hawk, plumb bob and line,

chisel and hammer. And they still work with traditional materials such as adobe block, fired brick, stone, and cement.



It is a trade that honors tradition but is now changing to adapt to newer materials, technologies, and requirements. In many buildings, prefabricated materials that look like brick but come in sheets are replacing brickwork. As a consequence, the brick-laying aspect of masonry, as represented at the Cosmopolitan, is fast becoming a dying art.

To better maintain and accurately repair historic buildings like the Cosmopolitan, California State Parks needs, perhaps more than anything else, to build an apprenticeship program in which the old ways, the knowledge and dignity of skilled trades, are preserved and passed on to a new generation.

